

Message Text

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67

ACTION AF-06

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INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-11 /076 W

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R 031735Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8097

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY 2140

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 COTONOU 0181

7. EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT THE HASTILY-ARRANGED PUBLIC AIRING OF THE "COUP" REPORT IS CONNECTED WITH THE TOGO/BENIN BORDER PROBLEM AND EFFORTS OF BENIN'S NEIGHBORS TO RESOLVE IT. THE GPRB HAD DECLARED PUBLICLY ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS THAT IT WOULD NOT OPEN ITS BORDER TO TOGOLESE UNTIL ITS INVESTIGATION OF THE PLOT WAS COMPLETED. SINCE THE PLOT "EVIDENCE" WAS SO PALTRY, THE BENIN GOVERNMENT DECIDED A FEW MONTHS AGO NOT TO PUBLICIZE THE MATTER FURTHER. HOWEVER, THE NIGERIANS AND OTHERS ARE PRESSING HARD TO GET THE BORDER REOPENED. BENINESE HANDLING OF THE MATTER THEREFORE WAS CHANGED. THEY STAGED THE "TRIBUNAL" EXERCISE AND NOW WE EXPECT THEM TO ANNOUNCE THAT ALL TOGOLESE EXCEPT THOSE EXCLUDED BY THE TRIBUNAL'S VERDICT WILL BE ALLOWED TO CROSS THE FRONTIER. SUCH TACTICS WOULD PUT THE MONKEY ON TOGO'S BACK. WE HAVE REPORTED NIGERIAN EMBASSY'S CONFIDENCE THAT THE BORDER WOULD BE OPEN BY MID WEEK (REFTEL B). WE BELIEVE BENIN GOVERNMENT THROUGH "CONDEMNATION" OF TOGO BY THE REVOLUTIONARY TRIBUNAL, HOPES TO GOAD EYADEMA INTO KEEPING THE BORDER CLOSED. THEN TOGO WILL HAVE TO BEAR RESPONSIBILITY VIS-A-VIS NIGERIA AND GHANA FOR ENFORCING A MEASURE (CLOSURE) THAT BENIN WANTS.

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8. THE REVOLUTIONARY TRIBUNAL WAS NOT A PROPER COURT BUT THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE (ALTERNATELY NATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL) OF BENIN'S SINGLE MARXIST PARTY, CONVERTING ITSELF INTO A "PEOPLE'S COURT." DESPITE WINDOW DRESSING, ITS COMPOSITION,

PROCEDURES AND FINDINGS BORE NO RESEMBLANCE TO THOSE OF A
PROPER JUDICIAL INSTITUTION IN A FREE COUNTRY.

9. AS WITH THE KANGAROO COURT OF LAST MARCH WHICH FOLLOWED
THE ASSOGBA COUP ATTEMPT, THIS "TRIBUNAL" HANDED DOWN STIFF SENTENCES
ON A NUMBER OF PERSONS AGAINST WHOM LITTLE OR NO PROOF WAS
PRESENTED IN THE PUBLIC BROADCAST OF THE INVESTIGATION REPORT.
NOR DID THE ACCUSED HAVE ANY OPPORTUNITY TO BE HEARD. IN FACT,
AN OVERWHELMING BRIEF COULD BE WRITTEN TO ILLUSTRATE BENIN
GOVERNMENT'S VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THIS "TRIAL", AS WELL AS
IN THE EARLIER TRIAL AND IN ITS RELATIONS WITH ITS POPULATION GENERAL
LY.

10. THE PHONEST ASPECT OF THE MOST RECENT "TRIAL" IS THAT THE
GOVERNMENT'S CASE IS ALMOST ENTIRELY BASED ON THE TESTIMONY OF
A SINGLE UNNAMED NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER, WHO ALLEGEDLY WAS
A KEY ELEMENT IN THE PLOT. BASED ON INFORMATION GATHERED BY THE
EMBASSY PRIOR TO AND JUST AFTER THE ANNOUNCED DISCOVERY OF THIS
ALLEGED PLOT, IT APPEARS THAT NOTHING WAS UNCOVERED ON THE ROLE OR
PLANS OF THE FRONT FOR THE LIBERATION AND REHABILITATION OF DAHOMEY,
THE GROUP LED BY FORMER AMBASSADOR GRATIEN POGNON. WE BELIEVE,
HOWEVER, THAT THE GPRB DID UNCOVER A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF
EVIDENCE OF ZINSOUIST PLOTTING AND THAT THERE MAY BE SOME FACTUAL
BASIS FOR CHARGES AGAINST THE TOGOLESE FOREIGN MINISTRY. END COMMENT
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11. DETAILS BY AIRGRAM.
ENGLE

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<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

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